



# SCOPING NOTICE

## Fuels Reduction Projects

## Environmental Assessment

National Park Service - Grand Teton National Park

March 2003

### SCOPING NOTICE

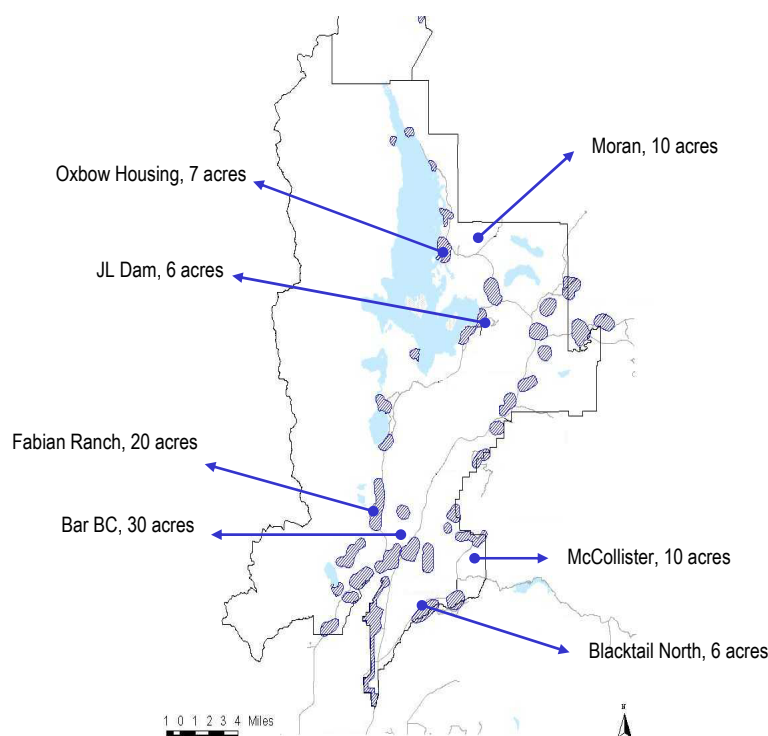
*The National Park Service is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for proposed fuels reduction projects at seven park areas within Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming. You are invited to attend a **Public Scoping Open House** being held on **April 24, 2003** from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Jackson Hole Middle School in Jackson, Wyoming.*

*The public is encouraged to attend at any time during the three-hour open house session. No presentations are scheduled. Instead, the open house format is intended to promote more informal interaction with exhibits and opportunities to make written and verbal comments. Park staff will be available to provide information and answer questions.*

### HEALTHY FORESTS INITIATIVE BACKGROUND

The President's Healthy Forests Initiative for Wildfire Prevention and Stronger Communities (August 22, 2002) called for administrative improvements that ensure more timely decisions, greater efficiency, and better results in projects that reduce the risk of extreme wildfires and restore forest and rangeland health. Such improvements will help reduce threats to community safety and better protect wildlife and ecosystems. To this end, the President directed that guidance be developed to ensure consistent procedures under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for fuels reduction and fire-adapted ecosystem restoration projects, including development of a model streamlined Environmental Assessment (EA) for such projects.

Grand Teton National Park (GTNP) has been selected to participate in this pilot program to streamline the EA process. An interdisciplinary planning team will use this guidance in the field over the next several months to complete an EA for fuels reduction projects at seven different locations addressing 89 acres within the park. These hazard-fuels reduction areas, selected as "pilot projects" for testing streamlined environmental assessments under the NEPA process, are intended to determine the effectiveness of expediting procedures to



accomplish fuels treatment work. GTNP will still adhere to existing NPS policies, recognizing that early public and agency scoping and participation are critical to the success of this project.



## PURPOSE AND NEED

The **purpose** of these seven fuel reduction projects is to provide protection of structures from fire in the wildland-urban interface. The project areas contain large amounts of dead and down ground fuels, closely spaced trees with interlocking crowns, dead standing snags, and numerous small trees in the understory. During fires, these fuel conditions can contribute to high flammability and resistance to control by fire crews and equipment. When these fuels lie in close proximity to inholdings, historic buildings, private structures, and property, there is a high risk that fire will consume the structures and limit fire management containment options. These project areas require treatment that will change fire behavior by reducing flame lengths and fire intensity and creating conditions more favorable for fire suppression operations.

The **need** is to reduce the risk of wildland fire to structures and the environment while providing for firefighter and public safety. Wildland fires in wildland-urban interface areas are very complex and costly to manage, and they pose a significant safety risk to federal, state, and local firefighters assigned to these fires. Creating defensible space around these structures and providing safe emergency response access will reduce risk to human life, minimize risk to property, and protect the high financial and esthetic values associated with these areas.

## PROPOSED ACTION

The Grand Teton National Park demonstration project, totaling 89 acres, is a combination of seven small fuels management projects between Moran and Moose. The areas are comprised of mixed conifer and sage fuels. The park proposes to treat these areas by creating shaded fuel breaks in the mixed conifer fuels and increasing spacing by mowing sage fuels. Treatments will include thinning of overstory trees to a distance of 12 feet between trees or groups of trees, reducing seedling and pole size tree densities, reducing accumulations of downed logs and debris, and removing limbs within 6 feet of the ground. Methods will include a combination of cutting and piling of live vegetation, piling of dead vegetation, pile burning, broadcast burning, and fuel break mowing. Cut materials will be piled by hand and burned on site once they have adequately dried. All treatments except the mowing will be conducted by hand crews using chain and

handsaws to cut the debris into manageable lengths. The work will be focused near structures, reducing fuel accumulations in and adjacent to a number of historic buildings, private residences, government offices, government housing units, and Bureau of Reclamation properties in Grand Teton National Park. The seven project locations are:

- ❖ **McCollister** – Fuels reduction work and clean up of dead and down fuels around residence and outbuildings to reduce fire threat. (10 Acres)
- ❖ **Fabian Ranch** – Fuels reduction work and clean up of dead and down fuels around historic structures. This also will be used for historic scene maintenance. (20 Acres)
- ❖ **Blacktail North** – Fuels reduction work and clean up of dead and down fuels along the park boundary adjacent to private properties to reduce fire threat. (6 Acres)
- ❖ **Bar B C** - Fuels reduction work and clean up of dead and down fuels around historic structures. This also will be used for historic scene maintenance. (20 Acres of mowing, 10 Acres of chainsaw work)
- ❖ **Oxbow Housing (Jackson Lake Ranger Station)** - Fuels reduction work and clean up of dead and down fuels around residence and outbuildings to reduce fire threat. (7 Acres)
- ❖ **Moran** - Fuels reduction work and clean up of dead and down fuels around residence and outbuildings to reduce fire threat. This project was begun as prescribed burn preparation, but due to sage grouse concerns, treatment will be immediately adjacent to structures. (10 Acres)
- ❖ **Jackson Lake Dam** - Fuels reduction work and clean up of dead and down fuels around residence and outbuildings at the Bureau of Reclamation Administrative Site to reduce fire threat. (6 Acres)

## PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES

An internal scoping workshop was conducted to develop preliminary alternatives. All possible alternatives were laid out and analyzed to determine whether they met the project purpose, need, and desired future conditions. The internal scoping team also focused on mitigation measures that could be considered for each alternative. The result



was two alternatives that adequately addressed all the feasible options for analysis. After additional consideration of the purpose, need, goals, objectives and desired future conditions, the following alternatives represent the revised preliminary alternatives:

❑ **Alternative 1 - No Pre-Fire Treatment (No Action Alternative)**

This alternative involves no pre-wildland fire treatment. An aggressive public education program is in place with outreach to the community.

❑ **Alternative 2 - Mechanical Fuels Treatment With Pile Burning (Proposed Action)**

This alternative involves mechanically treating fuels adjacent to structures to meet current standards. It also includes several mitigation measures that will eliminate or minimize potential impacts to various resources. These measures will be listed in the EA, along with others that are identified throughout the process.

## ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED

**Prescribed Burning** – Use prescribed burning in treatment areas. Prescribed burning in these project areas prior to treatment is not acceptable due to high risk to structures and the potential for increased impacts to vegetation with higher intensity fires.

**Modify Structures** – Modify specific components of structures to reduce fire potential, i.e., changing roof types from wood to metal, etc. This proposal was dismissed due to historic structure rehabilitation and repair constraints, excessive cost, inability to control private residences, and its inability to reduce loss of property in the event of large wildland fire.

## PRELIMINARY RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS

Resource considerations identified to date include:

- ◆ Air Quality and Visibility
- ◆ Cultural Resources
- ◆ Public & Employee Safety
- ◆ Residential Viewscape
- ◆ Soundscape
- ◆ Vegetation (Non-Native & Invasive Species)

- ◆ Visitor Experience
- ◆ Water Quality
- ◆ Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

## NEPA PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The overall planning process is anticipated to extend over a period of approximately 6 months.

Project milestones include:

❖ Project Initiation:	Feb 2003
❖ Public Scoping:	Apr 2003
❖ Analysis & Consultation:	May 2003
❖ EA Preparation:	Jun 2003
❖ Public Review of EA:	Jul 2003
❖ Final Decision Document:	Aug 2003

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

**We want your comments!** Anyone interested in this planning effort is encouraged to visit the park web page at <http://www.nps.gov/grte/plans/planning.htm> which will contain information on current project activities. Comments can be emailed to **GRTE\_Planning@nps.gov**, or you may return the attached comment form to:

National Park Service  
Grand Teton National Park  
P.O. Drawer 170  
Moose, Wyoming 83012  
Attn: Planning Office

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Once we have received and reviewed the scoping comments, we will begin revising and analyzing the alternatives. The next step will be writing the EA, available for review this summer.

Thank you for your interest in Grand Teton National Park and your participation in the seven fuels reduction projects.



Pre and post treatment photos of previous treatment areas.

**COME JOIN US  
AT THE PUBLIC  
OPEN HOUSE ON  
APRIL 24, 2003!**



**Scoping Comment Form  
Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming  
Fuels Reduction Projects Environmental Assessment**

Please respond to the following questions and **return this form by May 4, 2003**. You may attach additional pages if needed. Also, include your name, mailing address and email address (if applicable) in the space provided below. Thank you again for your interest in Grand Teton National Park's Fire Management Program.

Please be aware that names and addresses of respondents may be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act. Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. There also may be circumstances in which we would withhold from the record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comments. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.

What issues would you like to see addressed?

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What alternatives or alternative fuels reduction strategies would you like to see addressed?

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Do you have additional information, concerns, or other comments about the proposal?

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☐ **Please check the box if you would like to remain on the mailing list to receive additional information concerning this proposal.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-Mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Street/Box #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City, State, Zip Code:** \_\_\_\_\_